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TIMELY FARM TOPICS NO. 57 a

Cap 3

WHAT FARM FAMILIES DO WITH MORE MONEY

A discussion by Dr. Arthur F. Raper, Social Science Analyst, Bureau of Agricultural Economics; and John Baker, Chief of the Radio Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Recorded March 28, 1946. Time: 6 minutes, 47 seconds, without announcer's parts.

ANNOUNCER'S OPENING AND CLOSING

OPENING

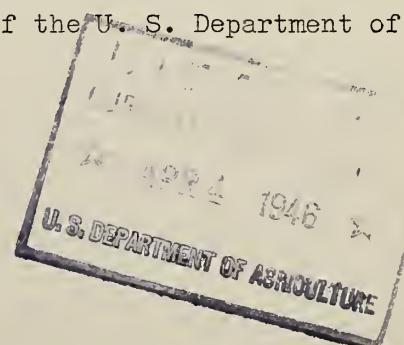
ANNOUNCER (LIVE):

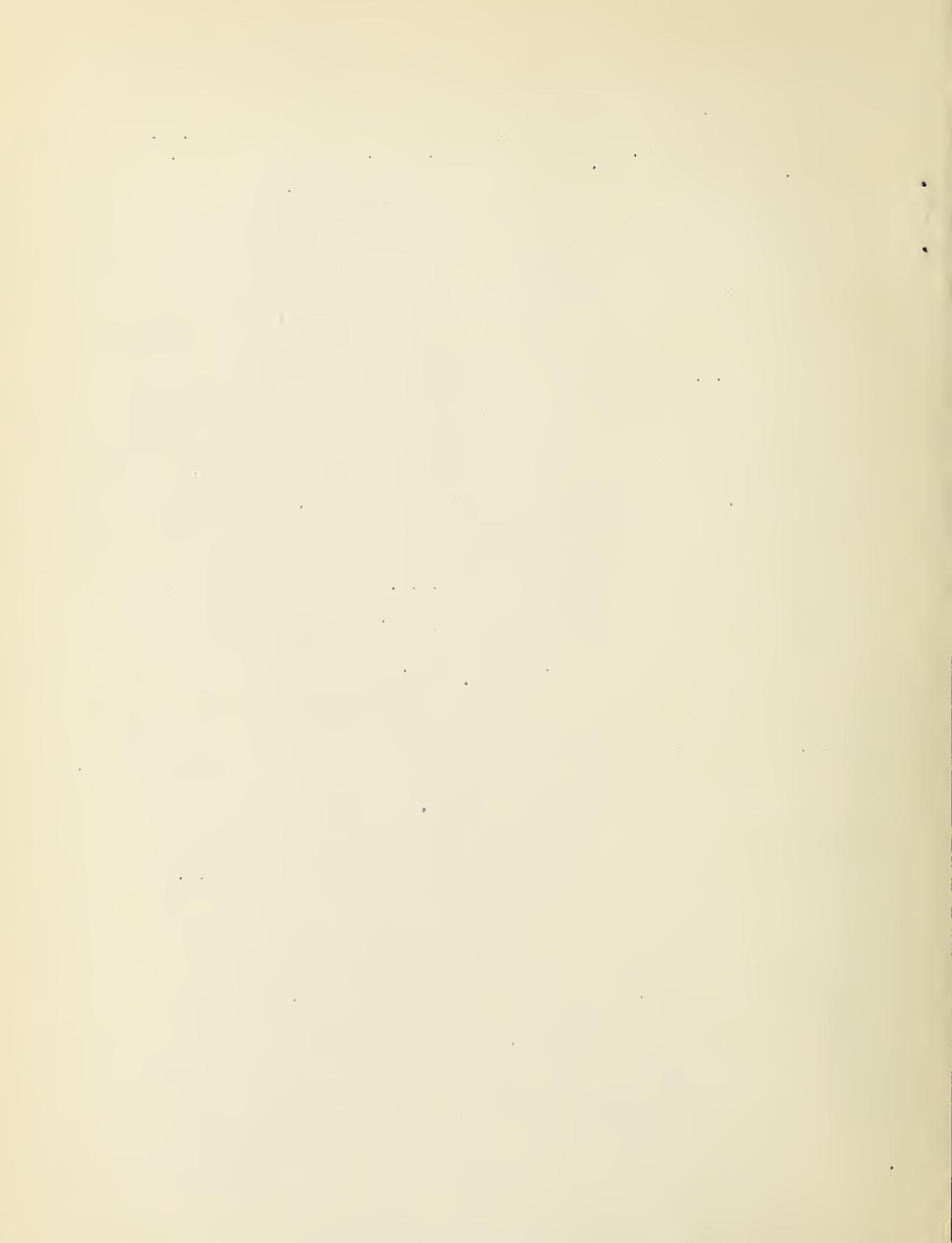
We often speculate about what people would do with money if they had it. Well . . . farm families have had the largest incomes in the last five years they've ever had. And the Department of Agriculture has just gathered some information on the use they're making of this extra money. And this information isn't speculation . . . it's been systematically collected by field agents of the Department in 71 farming counties scattered all over the country . . . enough counties to give a pretty good sample for the whole country. We're going to hear some of the story these reports tell . . . now . . . from John Baker of the Department of Agriculture, and a guest he has with him. By transcription . . . John Baker.

CLOSING

ANNOUNCER (LIVE)

And that's how farm people are using their increased incomes . . . to pay their debts, to improve their farming operations, to live better themselves, and to save something for a rainy day. This report came to us from Dr. Arthur F. Raper and John Baker of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.





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TRANSCRIPTION:

BAKER: Our guest is Dr. Arthur F. Raper, Department of Agriculture economist, who analyzed the Department field reports from 71 counties, to find out what farm people are using their increased wartime incomes for. What's at the top of the list, Dr. Raper?

RAPER: Debts, John . . . farm people are using their extra money to get out of debt. Bankers say there're more farmers out of debt now than ever before.

BAKER: Well, I know farm mortgages are way down . . . the lowest in 30 years.

RAPER: You get the same sort of report on all counties. For instance, a loan association that held 170 farms 5 years ago, hasn't got a single farm now.

BAKER: Fine . . . and what's the word on delinquent taxes?

RAPER: Delinquent taxes are the lowest on record. Even old, forgotten debts are being paid up. In almost any county, a merchant or a doctor can be heard telling about somebody paying up a back bill he never expected to collect. Of course, there'll always be some bad debts in the country--just as there are in the city--but they're undoubtedly lower now than ever.

BAKER: So . . . that's the first thing farm people do with extra money . . . they pay up their back debts and catch up with their taxes. What's the second thing?

RAPER: They're financing their own farming operations.

BAKER: Farmers don't have to borrow money for fertilizer or seed . . . or equipment. Or money to see them through until they make a crop?

RAPER: Many of them don't have to. Borrowing money to produce crops has been reduced considerably by larger wartime incomes. Most of the crop financing that's going on now is in the Cotton Belt.

BAKER: Unquestionably, farmers must have put a lot of money back into the farm business during the war . . . they had to do it to raise the big crops asked of them--that means more fertilizer . . . more machinery . . .

RAPER: That's true . . . especially of the larger farm operators in the Wheat and Corn Belts. Farmers nearly everywhere have bought power-driven machinery to save labor, and they've improved their livestock--bought better animals and fed them well.

BAKER: Now, that's "debts" and the "farming business." After they're taken care of, if there's anything left, maybe the family can start thinking of spending something on themselves . . .

RAPER: That's just what you'd expect . . . and that's the way it works out--especially with the families of low incomes. They've bought more food . . . usually better food . . . and more clothes. By the way, merchants commented on this . . . said the low income families wouldn't have spent as much money for food and clothes if they could have bought automobiles.

BAKER: How about house furnishings?

RAPER: Merchants and furniture dealers say they've sold all kinds of things to make farm homes more comfortable . . . and the lowest income families have bought such essential things as cooking pans, dishes, linoleum, chairs . . . and beds.

BAKER: If it weren't for restrictions on building materials, don't you suppose a lot of money would have gone into new buildings?

RAPER: That's undoubtedly true of farm families of all groups, especially the low-income families. On the West Coast, particularly, farm labor families have been very anxious to improve their housing situation. Some have bought small lots, and are building houses on them as they get the money . . . and have time to work on the buildings. In a cut-over-timber section of northern Wisconsin, two out of every five houses have received some sort of improvement in recent months.

BAKER: Now, we've mentioned debts, farming operations, and improving general living conditions, Dr. Raper . . .

RAPER: And that brings us to a fourth big use farmers have made of their extra incomes . . . war savings.

BAKER: Farm savings really climbed during the war years.

RAPER: They did. It showed up in every one of our 71 sample counties. For instance the number of bank depositors rose in all counties--doubled in some. And the size of bank deposits shot up too--five times as high in some counties.

BAKER: Those bank savings are separate from the savings in war bonds?

RAPER: Oh, yes. They're separate matters entirely. In many counties, the value of farmers' war bonds was as great, or greater, than the bank deposits.

BAKER: Not to mention what might be in the old sock . . . or what's sewed up in the mattress, that bankers . . . and even economists . . . don't know anything about.

RAPER: (LAUGH) The economists have heard some rumors, especially in the southern mountain areas, and places with large numbers of foreign-language families. Local reports have it that quite a bit of farm cash has been kept at home . . . and some has been looked up in safety deposit boxes, too.

BAKER: Any information on where the largest savings are?

RAPER: In the Midwest Corn Belt. In many counties the bank deposits and bond purchases of farmers in the Corn Belt averaged higher than those of city people. Next is the Wheat Belt . . . then the Dairy Belt.

BAKER: And the lowest bank deposits and bond purchases I'd guess are in the Cotton Belt?

RAPER: Yes, generally speaking. For while some families have accumulated savings, many of them in the cotton belt have saved nothing at all. But all reports show that the low-income families spent more money for food and clothes than ever before. Mostly they lived up their increased wages as they got them.

BAKER: Now, Dr. Raper, it's sort of traditional with farm people to hold on to a little for a "rainy day." Is it still working that way?

RAPER: Yes, it is. For a "rainy day" . . . or for "dry years" as the people out in the grasslands would say. Farmers want to hang on to their wartime savings, except for certain things they've already planned to buy . . . and for which they've already earmarked some of their money.

BAKER: These are probably big items like machinery and cars?

RAPER: That's it . . . trucks and cars . . . and power-driven machinery to save labor--tractors, combines, corn pickers, cane cutters and mechanical cotton pickers.

BAKER: Now, farmers, like everybody else, are probably looking forward to some new houses, aren't they?

RAPER: To a certain extent, yes. Especially on the West Coast, and in the Wheat Belt. But what farm families really want the most with their increased incomes is modern conveniences . . . more of the conveniences that city folks have . . . central heat, hot water, a telephone, a road right to the door that's good in all weather . . . and electricity. How farm people do want electricity!

BAKER: I know . . . folks who take electricity for granted can't even imagine how many people in the country still don't have it . . . and how these folks long for it.

RAPER: Especially the farm women. Listen to this letter I've just received from a Southern farm woman:

VOICE: I think the most interesting of all for farm people is electricity . . . you can't imagine how much lights mean to you out in the country. Then . . . there's the iron and the churn . . . and the radio. The washing machine . . . the refrigerator . . . and the waffle iron. And, too, you can have running water in the house with electricity. All other improvements are grand . . . but for me, give me electricity.

BAKER: Well, I hope she gets that electricity, Dr. Raper . . . soon . . . and all the things that go with it.

RAPER: So do I, John. That's the really great thing that wartime savings have done for farm people . . . given thousands and thousands of 'em a chance--as one farm woman in Idaho put it to me--to "have some of the things we've always wanted."

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DO A FARM JOB EASIER--DO IT BETTER

A discussion by Irvin D. Mayer, agricultural engineer, Extension Service Farm Labor Program, and John Baker, Chief of the Radio Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Recorded March 28, 1946. Time: 6 minutes, 37 seconds, without announcer's parts.

ANNOUNCERS OPENING AND CLOSING

OPENING

ANNOUNCER (LIVE):

We've all marveled at the way American farmers produced such mountains of food during the war . . . with much of their best help gone . . . and metal being made into tanks and guns instead of plows and tractors. How are farmers managing to come through the labor shortage with such flying colors? What new tricks are they learning about getting farm work done . . . and how are they learning them. Irvin D. Mayer (pronounced "Myer") of the Extension Service Farm Labor Program of the U. S. Department of Agriculture knows a lot of the answers to these questions . . . and John Baker of the Department is going to find out for us what he thinks. By transcription . . . Irvin D. Mayer and John Baker.

CLOSING

ANNOUNCER (LIVE):

Folks, that was Irvin D. Mayer and John Baker of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington. And while we're on this business of saving work around the farm, here's my contribution . . . save 5 steps of travel a day, and you save a mile a year.

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TRANSCRIPTION:

BAKER: How do you think farmers are solving their labor problems, Mr. Mayer?

MAYER: Well, a big part of the answer is that farmers are discovering easier and better ways to do their work. Instead of taking 20 steps to do something, they're learning how to do it in 10 steps. That's putting it broadly, but that's the idea.

BAKER: Tell us how farmers have gone about improving their labor efficiency so remarkably...did each man become a sort of efficiency expert for his own place...or was it an organized effort?

MAYER: Some of both. Individual farmers figured out "home-made hoot nannies" of their own to save time and energy. And some of the State Extension Services have organized programs for getting farm people together... to show each other their new tricks, and figure out ideas for even better tricks.

BAKER: Something like the county fair idea?

MAYER: Something like it. For instance, over 40,000 farm people out in the State of Washington went to local meetings to see displays of equipment that farmers all through the State had made to save work.

BAKER: And the farmers in Washington State weren't the only ones who did it?

MAYER: Oh, no ... just some of the first. Take Wisconsin . . . over 60,000 Wisconsin farm people turned out for farm labor shows to see what new ideas they could get to save themselves work. Right now, Illinois farmers are rolling up a big attendance at meetings where they're showing over 600 different items of home-made equipment...all designed to save farmers work.

BAKER: Now what sort of equipment do people see when they go to one of these farm labor shows?

MAYER: Well, in Washington State the list went something like this: a home-made buck rake on a car...a carrier for rinsing dairy pails...a manure loader...a tractor posthole digger...a post puller...a buzz saw mounted on a tractor. Does that give you the idea? --

BAKER: Now I know what a hootnanny is.

MAYER: That's on the farm side, of course. There was something for the women folks too, on the home side. Things like a wide ironing board you could adjust for height. Wide to handle sheets and big flat work quicker and easier...and adjustable so you can sit down and iron. It takes a third less energy to sit down and iron.

BAKER: You sound like these labor saving shows really get down to cases.

MAYER: They do. And just one more thing about the Washington State program. I mentioned the home-made buck rake. The State Extension Service at Pullman had printed plans for making it. Over 10,000 farmers who saw that buck-rake demonstrated sent for the directions for making it.

BAKER: Which is a fine example of what a good idea worked out by one man can add up to when a lot of other people have a chance to know about it.

MAYER: Exactly. If it saves only an hour for one farmer, that's a thousand hours for a thousand farmers. Another good example along that line is the frames to catch fruit that Guy Martin of Tehama County, California, developed. It's a very simple idea...but it saved thousands of bushels of fruit when the orchards couldn't get pickers.

BAKER: Tell us about this fruit frame idea....

MAYER: It's just a pair of wooden frames covered with wire netting and light canvas. When they're in place under a fruit tree, they look something like tilted airplane wings. When you shake the tree, the frames catch the fruit, and that's all there is to the idea. But it hadn't been done until Guy Martin did it... Now thousands of orchards use catching frames on fruit that ripens uniformly.

BAKER: Well, it's easy to see how something to catch the fruit would save a lot of work. No more crawling around on the ground, or checking boxes for individual packers.

MAYER: That's right. And if, along with the frames, you can use a mechanical tree shaker attached to the tractor, it speeds up the harvest work even more. Since farm help's been so scarce, Guy Martin's idea has saved many a prune and apricot in West Coast orchards.

BAKER: Let's get back to the shows a minute...these demonstrations were the beginning of a wartime movement that has spread pretty much all over the country.

MAYER: That's right. I often wonder what all the prize money offered for the best ideas has added up to by now.

BAKER: Prize contests figured in this too?

MAYER: You bet they did. A man who could tell you something about that is John W. Spencer of Grangeville, Idaho. John got a 100-dollar bond for the one-man cattle chute he designed and built himself.

BAKER: A one-man cattle chute?

MAYER: That's right. The shortage of help in the livestock industry brought John Spencer's one-man chute a lot of fame. In his own State of Idaho, 20,000 people saw that chute at farm machinery shows...and cattlemen all over the United States read about it.

BAKER: Good for John Spencer. Now, Mr. Mayer, hay-making is a job common to nearly all farms...whether East or West, or North or South. Folks tell me the labor shortage has just about revolutionized hay-making...as compared with the way the job used to be done.

MAYER: Hay-making's become so mechanized now, that in some cases two men can do the work 6 or 8 men used to do. I know of a ranch in Nebraska where two men actually put up 40 tons of hay a day by themselves.

BAKER: How on earth did they handle it?

MAYER: They used a slide stacker and a hay crib...and a back stop. Out in that same country, I've seen a tractor pull a whole stack of hay to the feed yard.

BAKER: Now that I'd like to see...

MAYER: They put a cable around the hay stack and use a tractor to pull the stack up on a low trailer, and pulled the trailer to the feed lot. They have a movie of it.

BAKER: Well, it's just another example of the sort of engineering jobs farmers are going in for these days.

MAYER: That's right. Say...did I tell you about the hay-making study in Minnesota?

BAKER: No....

MAYER: Well, an agricultural economist made a very careful study of the time used in hay making on several Minnesota farms...all in the same county. And among other things, it showed that a buck rake saves considerable time over a loader. Where the time is really saved is in picking up the load of hay in the field.

BAKER: And picking up that hay with a buck rake takes a lot of the strain off a man's back...

MAYER: That's true.

BAKER: Well, the war's over...but the world needs more food than ever...and the number of people on farms seems to keep on getting smaller. So it looks as if this new era of farm efficiency brought on by the war is here to stay.

MAYER: It looks that way. Certainly, there are no signs of a let-up at present. The farm labor supply seems to be shorter this year than it was last year.

BAKER: So, if there's a farm-labor demonstration going on nearby, it's pretty sure to be worth looking at...for the new ideas on saving work, and the fun of getting together with your neighbors. Most of your neighbors are pretty sure to be there....

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